

Detecting Signs of Hazing in Fraternities & Sororities

In the last decade, there has been a great deal more research conducted on why hazing occurs within collegiate organizations including the use of hazing as a rite of passage, desires for shared group and individual identities, exerting dominance and power, a mechanism for new members of an organization to exhibit sacrifice, and the contributing factors of moral disengagement, alcohol, and extreme masculinity. and organizational status, power, individual sacrifice, and inherent rite of passage behaviors and moral disengagement that may occur within groups (*Allan et al., 2020; Cimino, 2011; McCreary & Schutts, 2019; Sasso, 2015*). While we now know more about why hazing occurs, practitioners often struggle with applying the “why” to understanding and detecting when hazing occurs.

In a qualitative study including 7 focus groups and 30 participants from a variety of fraternity/sorority conferences/councils and campuses, members of the Piazza Center team uncovered common strategies advisors use to detect hazing. While the list below includes the most common strategies mentioned by participants, it is important to note the researchers found differences in strategies based on gender and race/ethnicity that need to be explored further.

Common Strategies to Detect Hazing



Analyze Available Data

What accessible data do you have to track patterns of new or abnormal behavior?

Examples:

- Academic performance
- Swipe card access records (buildings and events)



Identify Communication Channels

Who are knowledgeable and valuable stakeholders in your network you can have informal or formal conversations with about hazing behaviors they may notice?

Examples:

- Parents
- Para/professional staff (residential life, graduate assistants)
- Student leaders
- Student staff (work-study, assistants, etc.)



Observing Behavior in New Members

There are changes in new members that may be an indication of hazing, especially when you notice them in multiple new members of an organization.

Examples:

- Changes in communication patterns with others
- Physical appearance changes
- Social isolation
- Social media (especially a decrease in use)
- Use of inter/national ritual (especially a lack thereof)



Review Reporting Mechanisms

Using reporting tools are helpful the moment something is reported, but also can help detect patterns regarding timing of hazing incidents and common behaviors.

Examples:

- Hotlines
- Report forms

Next Steps in Research

Future steps in this research include uncovering significant early warning signs of hazing occurring within organizations and continuing to explore differences that may occur based on gender, race/ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics.

References

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